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Uneven Ground: The Undermining of the Alliance Between Commercial Farmers and the State in Zimbabwe 1990 – 1996

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This paper explores the deterioration of the strategic alliance between commercial farmers and the state in Zimbabwe after 1990.² Expiry of the Lancaster House constitution, the implementation of a structural adjustment program and the formal emergence of a black ‘empowerment’ lobby combined with severe drought had significantly altered the nature of Zimbabwe’s land debate by the mid 1990s. The deadlock in land redistribution during this period is often vaguely attributed to a combination of state apathy and white farmer resistance, but interest group dynamics were far more complex both internally and externally. This comprehensive analysis of the relative policies, positions and internal reconfigurations of key stakeholders explains the polarisation of the land debate, the collapse of the alliance and the slowdown in land transfers.

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² This paper is drawn from Chapter Four of my doctoral thesis, which explored the relationship between commercial farmers and the state in Zimbabwe. See Selby (2006) *Commercial Farmers and the State: Interest Group Politics and land Reform in Zimbabwe*, DPhil Thesis, Oxford.

“The CFU understands and accepts the need for land reform. Such reform should, however be implemented in a manner that ensures land is used on a sustainable productive basis...”

- Alan Burl (CFU President), 11 January 1991.³

“...time is of the essence and we cannot dissipate this precious commodity by haggling over the peripheral issues of the land question... it seems that we are not being understood... the land question is a time bomb which must be diffused right now”

- Witness Mangwende (Minister of Lands), 12 March 1992.⁴

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³ CFU Position Paper presented at the Emergency Farmers Meeting, 11 January 1991 (CFU, 1991).

⁴ Hansard Record of Parliamentary Debate, 12 March 1992.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

White farmers played an important pro-active role during the negotiations that led to successful political settlement in the 1970s. This is at odds with their perceived intransigence towards reform during the 1990s. Similarly, the pragmatism of ZANU PF at Independence was seemingly abandoned with the introduction of compulsory land acquisitions through the 1992 LAA. These hardening stances raise intriguing questions, especially because compromises were available to both interest groups. Land market interventions by government may have avoided the controversies and indirect costs of compulsory acquisition. Likewise, farmers could have promoted these market interventions, particularly land taxes, and encouraged further financial support from Britain. These are the questions at the heart of this paper and at the centre of the growing strains on the relationship between white farmers and the state in the 1990s.

The paper is structured in three sections. Firstly, I discuss the reconfiguration of the land debate and its interaction with emerging black economic interests. Secondly, I explore the impact of structural adjustment and the 1992 drought on Zimbabwe's agricultural sector and the land question. Finally, I analyse the communication breakdown between the CFU and the government during and after the passage of the 1992 Land Acquisition Act.

1.2 RECONFIGURING THE LAND DEBATE IN THE 1990s

1.2.1 The Re-Emergence of the Land Question

During and after the 1987 Unity Accord, the consolidation of a centralised, bureaucratic and technocratic administration partially obscured an extension of the ruling party's power within and outside the civil service. Ideological incompatibilities between the party and the bureaucratic state were increasingly exhibited in contradictions between technocratic agrarian policies and more radical populist calls for extensive land reform. Compared to the relationship between white farmers and the state in the 1980s, communications in the 1990s deteriorated markedly. Farmers misjudged the political debate, partly due to assumptions about their 'indispensability', and partly due to an inundation of land and race rhetoric at election times.

Joshua Nkomo told white farmers at the 1989 CFU congress: “The land question in this country sparked a revolution and now threatens to douse the fires of that revolution and start another – this time based on class”.⁵ John Brown (CFU President) responded by declaring that it was the best government for farmers that the country had ever seen. Later in the year, Nkomo addressed a farmers’ meeting in Bulawayo where he was asked for reassurances over property rights. When pressed, he lost his temper, smashed a glass of water against the wall, and declared:

Let me make this quite clear. You whites must make sure that you wear pyjamas to bed, because when we chase you out it will be at night and we don’t want you running down the streets naked.⁶

Most farmers attributed such outbursts to electioneering ahead of the 1990 elections. However Nkomo’s re-tabling of the land question catalysed debate at ZANU PF’s 1989 party congress where demands for land reform emerged from the black business elites (Moyo 1994: 2). ZANU PF’s land report after the congress reflected these shifts, and was adapted into a National Land Policy Document the following year. The fundamental goals were: to source a further 5 million hectares to settle another 110 000 families (arrived at by subtracting 52 000 already settled, from the 1982 target of 162 000), to introduce price controls on land, to introduce a land tax, to pay for land in local dollars rather than foreign currency, to introduce a maximum farm size and the principle of one-man one-farm, and to transfer better land (more of regions II and III). According to Alexander (1991: 606):

Commercial farmers reacted angrily. CFU President John Brown commented: ‘in my opinion, what is called the New National Land Policy is not yet a policy. It is a number of principles, some excellent, some fair and some downright wrong’.

Brown argues that his concerns were justified because of the ‘unrealistic targets’, the ‘questionable results’ of resettlement to date, and the significant areas of land already acquired that were still unsettled.⁷ Significant areas of land (3 million hectares) had been secured in the first half of 1980s, and government cited four reasons for the slow down during the second half of the 1980s: political conflict in Matabeleland; world recession and drought; the scarcity and price of land; and insufficient resettlement backup capacity.⁸ However, Government spending

⁵ Alexander (1991: 604). Also quoted by Terence Ranger ‘Review of the Press’, BZS, 6 June 1989.

⁶ Interview with John Brown, Mt Hampden, January 2004; Interview with Alan Burl, Marondera, March 2004.

⁷ Interview with John Brown, Mt Hampden, January 2004.

⁸ For a more detailed analysis of these reasons see Drinkwater (1988: 118-121).

on land diminished significantly during this period and the 1985 Land Acquisition Act, which gave government right of first refusal on all land sold, was scarcely used.⁹ Roth (1994a) shows that 1800 commercial farms, amounting to more than 1.5 million hectares, were offered to the state between the 1985 and 1992 Land Acquisition Acts, of which Government purchased less than one-third. Roth argues that the key constraints of the exercise were funding and resettlement capacity, rather than the supply or price of land. He shows that land prices did not increase prohibitively in real terms, but that funds allocated for land purchases declined significantly (Selby 2006: 135). There was no shortage of land for resettlement in the 1980s. The 1990s were different, with a new set of questions, interests and pressures for different types of land from existing stakeholders, and from an emerging set of new interest groups.¹⁰

1.2.2 Land and Economic Empowerment

Economic growth during the 1980s, was greatest within white-owned sectors due to established advantages in access to resources. In the 1990s a new black capitalist sector developed and promoted an ideology of ‘economic nationalism’. Some members of the ruling elite had accumulated properties throughout the 1980s, and after the Unity Accord competition between elites was generally kept within the ruling party structure. However, a younger generation of black entrepreneurs became increasingly vocal and looked to the state for economic opportunities. In return, they were used to extend the reach and influence of the ruling party.¹¹

However, the rhetoric of black economic empowerment, like the rhetoric of liberation and the rhetoric of socialism could be adapted and used to strategic political advantage. This was illustrated within the growing ideological support for economic structural adjustments and market liberalisation, in which empowerment was both a means and a goal. In this way economic liberalization became linked to economic nationalism (Raftopolous and Moyo, 1995:17).

Whites were now rare within the public sector, but still dominated the formal private sector, particularly in farming, finance and mining, so black empowerment had broad appeal. CFU minutes from 1991 record that “a huge empowerment boom had awakened throughout many

⁹ Alexander (1993: 195) cites the labelling of the 1985 LAA as a ‘paper tiger’.

¹⁰ For a start the population in the communal areas had increased by more than 30 percent in the 1980s.

¹¹ “Sudden flurry to help Indigenous businessmen” *The Sunday Mail*, February 3, 1991. Whereas the Tanzanian state had actively discouraged the emergence of a black middle class, ZANU PF co-opted emerging black entrepreneurs (Bryceson 1990; Rich Dorman 2002).

black sectors”.¹² Empowerment could be promoted through radical reforms or through gradual economic linkages. The CFU were aware of these options and their implications. David Hasluck (CFU Director) identified a “difference of opinion in the way forward between the radicals and the gradualists” and noted that the radical path was incongruent with structural adjustment.¹³ At this stage senior political figures also advocated gradual transition: Joshua Nkomo during discussions with the CFU explained that: “we have experienced 100 years of tying knots and ... [although there is] little change at the moment, 100 years of knot tying [cannot] be undone in 10 years”.¹⁴

In 1990, the Indigenous Business Development Centre (IBDC) was launched in a state-supported drive to promote black participation in big business.¹⁵ Qualified black executives were promoted ahead of white colleagues and the number of black chartered accountants and lawyers in executive roles increased rapidly.¹⁶ This was slow but generally merit-oriented and mediated by corporate process and structure. Within less formal sectors empowerment was promoted through unofficial means: the waving of taxes and regulations, selective contract and license allocations and relaxed operating guidelines. For small and medium sized black-owned businesses this created advantages against established white competitors.¹⁷ It also allowed the ruling party to control the benefits of empowerment, and who they accrued to. Given the dominance of white interests over the agricultural sector ten years after independence, it was the most obvious target for empowerment reform and the idea of promoting black commercial farmers appealed to many members of the elite, who saw opportunities for themselves.

1.2.3 A New Class of Black Farmer

The New National Land Policy distinguished itself from early resettlement by claiming to be the second phase of land reform: The 1980s had targeted the destitute, the landless and refugees and was focussed on small-scale farming.¹⁸ Plans for the 1990s envisaged a commercial farming class as the most desirable beneficiaries, running alongside a continuing program for small scale

¹² Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 May 1991: 3.

¹³ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 June 1991.

¹⁴ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 31 October 1990.

¹⁵ “Big Business and IBDC Urged to Work Together”, *The Herald*, 13 June 1991. A parliamentary committee on Indigenisation was formally established. Also see Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 June 1991.

¹⁶ Discussions with Andrew House, Harare, December 2004.

¹⁷ “Big Business and IBDC Urged to Work Together”, *The Herald*, 13 June 1991; Interview with Dr David Hatendi, Harare, January 2004.

¹⁸ Although, the idea of master farmers as key beneficiaries had been promoted in the 1980s the new focus on ‘commercial farmers’ on private tenure was a distinctly different angle.

farmers to be chosen ever more rigorously on grounds of productive potential rather than need. Politicians argued that this met the changing expectations of both structural adjustment and empowerment.¹⁹ Moyo and Skalnes (1990: 4) noted the shift in government objectives around land from the normative and political towards broader economic goals. However there were contradictions in promoting the two systems concurrently and a lack of clarity on how they would interact and which would receive priority.

Most land analyses of this period, including those by Moyo (1994; 1995) and Roth (1994), understate the differences between potential beneficiaries. There were three distinct categories: land-hungry small-scale producers; aspiring commercial farmers (often master farmers from purchase areas, or people in management positions on commercial farms or graduates of training colleges); and lastly, aspiring commercial farmer land lords - the political elite who were more likely to use land for status or speculative reasons. Official policy held that the first two categories could be resettled complementarily, and largely denied the existence of the third.²⁰

The Ministry of Agriculture and technical departments such as Agritex, shifted official objectives towards promoting larger-scale black commercial farming.²¹ This was based on two broad assumptions: firstly, that resettlement to date had been less than successful in increasing marketed production; and, secondly, that poverty reduction could only be achieved through economic growth, which could only be achieved through increased productivity, which appeared to only be possible through ‘proper’ commercial systems. Agriculture Minister Mangwende used the impacts of the 1992 drought to justify the policy shift to the CFU, arguing that irrigation and commercial production systems had shown their value, whereas communal areas had suffered a sharp fall in production.²² The new direction was also rhetorically conducive with both ESAP and ‘empowerment’ - black commercial farmers were expected to benefit from export crops.²³ While government policy continued to include small scale resettlement, it received diminishing amounts of attention, credibility and resources.

By the early 1990s most government officials seemed to hail the political successes but accept the economic shortfalls of resettlement. CFU records claim that “many senior officials and MPs

¹⁹ Interview with Dr Kumbirai Kangai, Harare, December 2003.

²⁰ For example, see Moyo (1994: 22).

²¹ For example, see the New National Land Policy Paper (GoZ, 1990).

²² Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 February 1992

²³ Interview with Dr Robbie Mupawose, Harare, January 2004.

spoke quite pragmatically about the ‘failures’ of the resettlement program”.²⁴ During parliamentary debate over a commission to examine the results of resettlement, the Minister of Agriculture, Mangwende, stated:

Of course we have all accepted that the first phase of resettlement had its shortcomings, especially on the settler selection aspect. (It) was meant to address a political reality... we had to give them land irrespective of whether they were productive or not. There was no time to plan, select and train these people...the second phase should be a productive one.²⁵

He insisted that the new program required efficient utilization of land on a sustainable basis and that he wanted to see “one hectare in the communal lands produce what one hectare in the commercial sector does”, echoing Denis Norman from 1981.²⁶ There was a growing opinion, driven by empowerment, economic-adjustment and productivity arguments that further resettlement should be commercially oriented and include larger scale farms. Minister of Lands Sidney Sekeremayi, explained: “the objective of land distribution is not merely to give land to the landless masses, but to create an (black) agricultural community on land which will no longer be just subsistence but commercial in orientation”.²⁷ Mangwende, claimed “we are not going to give land to everyone including those who were not making use of it in the past, but only to those who have the wish, desire, commitment and knowledge of using the land” (Alexander 1991: 605). Whilst the emphasis on productivity in resettlement was not new, the commercial direction and implied increase in farm sizes was.

For most commercial farmers, the perceived failures of resettlement in the 1980s had as much to do with systems of land-tenure, as with the lack of official support.²⁸ The ‘Tragedy of the Commons’ was perceived by many farmers to be the key flaw to communal production techniques, along with the inability to use land as collateral for credit. To many white farmers promoting a black commercial farming class was more desirable than what they saw as expanding communal areas through small-scale resettlement. Communal production systems were regarded as unproductive, subsistence oriented and inferior during the colonial era, and were increasingly perceived in the same way by the black-run administration after independence.

²⁴ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting 25 September 1991: Lands and Legislation Appendix.

²⁵ Extract from *Hansard* Record of Parliamentary Debate, 11 March 1992.

²⁶ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 31 October, 1990. For more information on Norman’s (1986) strategy see his Foreword. Norman and Mupawose’s approach was incentive-led.

²⁷ This was also cited in the National Land Policy Document (Alexander 1993: 186 and 1994: 333).

²⁸ This perspective was supported in reports by the World Bank (1991) and the Whitsun Foundation (1981) and fuelled opinions that land redistribution alone, in its contemporary format, could not solve Zimbabwe’s poverty problem.

More fundamentally, this shifted the nature and direction of the land question. Despite politicians continuing to play the populist land card, the new focus on ‘productivity’ and on black ‘capitalist’ farmers threatened to sideline the peasantry and their needs for land redistribution.²⁹ It also sought to break-down the dualism of the system, but was immediately affected by the impacts of structural adjustment on the land question.

1.3 STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND LAND REFORM

Zimbabwe’s Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) was adopted for two reasons. Firstly, an economic crisis had resulted from excessive borrowings and government expenditure leading to a balance-of-payments crisis. Secondly IFI-modelled reforms were being implemented throughout the developing world. Bernard Chidzero, the Finance Minister, advocated economic liberalisation throughout the 1980s and his personal influence, along with support from prominent black businessmen was instrumental in its approval.

Zimbabwe had inherited a robust but protected economy, along with controversial debts (over US\$500 million) from the Rhodesian era.³⁰ The post-Independence administration was encouraged, primarily by the IMF, to borrow further and to enter international markets that had been inaccessible during sanctions (Williams, 1982). Much of the expenditure was welfare-oriented and resulted in significant achievements in rural infrastructure, health and education. However, with overly optimistic growth projections, land funding pledges, and expectations of peace dividends, state expenditure became over-extended. Development funding pledges did not materialise in the amounts expected, mainly due to donor conditions.³¹ By 1984, Zimbabwe’s external debt had grown to \$US 2.4 billion and the debt servicing ratio to 25 percent of exports (EIU, 1987: 38). The drought of 1983/4 and the tobacco sector’s shaky re-entry into world markets tempered the envisaged peace dividend. During the second half of the 1980s, the debt burden expanded under a bloated civil service, and a large loss-making parastatal portfolio.

The ESAP package envisaged currency devaluation, reduced government expenditure, privatisation and market liberalisation. Although portrayed as a home-grown solution, it was

²⁹ “Land plan: New Doubts”, *Parade Magazine*, December 1990, p. 23.

³⁰ There have always been contentions over inheriting Rhodesia’s debt, amounting to more than \$500 million.

³¹ ZIMCORD funding pledges in 1981 exceeded \$2 billion, of which only thirty to forty percent actually materialised (Jenkins, 1997).

based on IFI prescriptions and Zimbabwe's selective and partial adoption of the program suggests that key administrators remained opposed to aspects of it.³² Negative impacts were immediately evident. Inflation rose and real wages declined. Manufacturing contracted on exposure to regional competition and formal urban employment declined by nearly ten percent (30,000 jobs). Overall unemployment grew at alarming rates due to increasing school leavers against a stagnant job market. Government spending cuts adversely affected social infrastructure and services, particularly in rural areas. The 1992 drought and the 1995 drought exacerbated these difficulties, but as Robertson (2001) illustrated, ESAP was showing longer-term benefits by 1996/97, when record growth across a more diversified economy was recorded.

Much of this economic growth was skewed towards established capital with international connections, most of which was white-owned. Lower-tier wage earners, smaller businesses and communal producers were left exposed to inflation and reduced government spending. Visible and widening disparities in wealth all-too-often overshadowed governance issues such as selective-empowerment, land tenure restrictions and controversial government expenditure. Jenkins (1997) argues that sustained fiscal indiscipline, resulting from unnecessary defence expenditure, civil-service salaries, and a growing culture of high-level corruption, absorbed critical resources that could otherwise have softened the impacts of ESAP. Instead, reduced spending on welfare services, such as health and education, magnified socio-economic problems.

1.3.1 The Impacts of Structural Adjustment on Commercial Farming

Market deregulation provided commercial farmers with two diversification opportunities: they could access export markets or they could exploit restructuring domestic markets. Export incentives included a nine percent tax reduction and an Export Retention Scheme (ERS), allowing exporters to retain a proportion of income in foreign currency, with which to import inputs. Two basic strategies for accumulation emerged: intensification on existing land, or expansion on increased physical areas.³³ Moyo (2000) identified three significant types of export-related expansion: horticulture, cut-flower production and wildlife-related enterprises. Domestic-oriented diversification, expansion and vertical-integration strategies emerged later,

³² Officials were particularly concerned by the Zambian regime change in 1992, in which SAP reforms undermined Kaunda's power by restricting UNIP's patronage system.

³³ These land use changes, and particularly the choice between intensification versus expansion, have parallels with the strategies of large-scale Orange Free State farmers, observed by Beinart (1984a).

due to delayed and hesitant market-deregulation.³⁴ Tobacco and beef were unusual; both industries were significant exporters, but controlled through centralised marketing systems.

There was an immediate divide between exporters and producers targeting domestic markets, reflected in CFU records. Antony Swire-Thompson (CFU Vice-President) remarked in 1991 that “current policies are encouraging everyone to grow roses or tobacco...food producers are getting no incentives at all”.³⁵ In November of 1991, following a review of foreign currency controls, Alan Burl expressed concern that the Export Retention Scheme was not helping domestic industries.³⁶ Oliver Newton (Cereals Producers Association (CPA) Chairman) noted a move away from wheat towards export horticulture and, even in 1995, Peter MacSporran (CFU President) aired concerns about the financial status of non-exporting farmers.³⁷ Input costs increasingly reflected export prices, and the ‘exporter v local’ divide became a notable plane of structural differentiation among farmers, often reflected regionally.

The impact of delayed and partial liberalisation in domestic markets was demonstrated in the dairy industry, which experienced a crisis towards the end of 1991. Government reluctance to decontrol milk prices, despite input (bran and feed) deregulation earlier in the year, placed dairy farmers in a cost-price squeeze. *The Farmer Magazine* illustrated that stock feed prices had risen by more than 100 percent in one year, amounting to 60 percent of input costs, whilst milk prices had declined in real terms.³⁸ The Dairy Producers’ Association declared that “the current fiasco with stock feeds is an example of trade liberalisation gone wrong” and argued that deregulation had been started at the wrong end of the processing chain.³⁹ Pressure on domestic producers encouraged many to move into export crops. Although large-scale producers had credit access to do so quickly, small-scale producers in communal and resettlement areas did not. With time, domestic markets did transform, through commodity exchanges and vertical-integration opportunities, but these also required capital and favoured large-scale established producers.

³⁴ Initial shocks of currency devaluation and inflation also adversely affected producers targeting domestic markets. In the first year of implementation the currency devalued by 30 percent and inflation began to climb (Jenkins, 1997).

³⁵ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 25 September 1991, p 16. This proved perceptive the following year, during the fallout from severe drought.

³⁶ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 November 1991.

³⁷ A diminishing proportion of farmers did not have some form of export income. In the Case Study sample, about half of the farmers were still wholly domestic-based. Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 April 1995.

³⁸ *The Farmer Magazine*, 11 February 1992, p 3.

³⁹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 November 1991

The seventy commercial farms in my case study area revealed interesting patterns in the 1989-1997 period (Selby, 2006: Appendix I). More than half of the farms diversified substantially during ESAP. Eight rose projects, nine fresh-produce operations, three field-flower enterprises, six citrus orchards, five ostrich schemes, and four tourism-related ventures were started. A co-operative fresh-produce pack-shed, an ostrich tannery, and a SADC citrus nursery emerged as supporting developments. Domestic sector reforms followed, including a large cattle feedlot and abattoir, three new butcheries, two industrial milling operations and two commercial bakeries. Three dairy producers began processing and two additional farm shops and kiosks were established. About twenty farms did not restructure; they were generally the less-developed properties, or secondary holdings and accounted for less than thirty percent of production before 1990 and less than twenty percent by 1995.⁴⁰ Diversification increased and intensified production within the survey area. Export-crop areas increased markedly but because most were highly intensive, food-crop areas only declined marginally; maize areas decreased by about 15 percent, but wheat plantings increased by 30 percent. Tobacco areas expanded by nearly 20 percent and permanent employment grew by nearly 25 percent (explained by the proliferation of horticultural enterprises).⁴¹ Cattle numbers in the case study area decreased due to the droughts and subsequent lack of recovery program, but were compensated in aggregate terms by Parma Meat's intensive feedlot expansion.

Structural adjustment encouraged inward flows of foreign direct investment (FDI), and capital flows out of Harare and Bulawayo into rural areas, for farming or tourism ventures.⁴² This was often through family connections or business contacts, and created further differentiation in local farming communities. FDI consisted of both multinational capital and private capital. Joint ventures, such as Luxaflor Roses, were established between white farmers and European partners. Similar arrangements spread into the wildlife sector as a number of ranches and lodges in Matabeleland, Masvingo and the Midlands were purchased by international investors.

ESAP also exposed variations in farmers' entrepreneurship and management skills. Land policy and discourse has always emphasized the importance of 'training' or 'knowledge' among small scale farmers, but the 'skills' factor is too often dismissed by analysts of the large scale farming sector. Chapter One discussed how difficult seasons over time, produced better farmers. During

⁴⁰ Tobacco systems were conducive financially and management-wise for diversification.

⁴¹ The national tobacco industry grew notably during this period. Foreign currency earnings increased from \$US 310 million in 1990 to \$US 500 million by 1996.

⁴² Many Harare based investors struck up rose-growing partnerships with farmers. Discussions with Keith Butler, Harare 2003.

ESAP, resourceful, hardworking farmers were often rewarded, whereas inflexible operators were exposed by macroeconomic shocks such as inflation, exchange rate devaluations and higher interest rates. Most successful farming expansions used established advantages of credit access, experience and industry contacts, but they also illustrated the importance of skills at practical farming levels, and at business and marketing levels.⁴³

Some of this entrepreneurship carried through to a younger generation of farmers. Moyo (1994: 18) and Cliffe (1988:315) argue, incorrectly, that children of white farmers were increasingly disinterested in farming. Within the case study area most farming families had at least one son or daughter who returned to farm, and at least two children returned in eight of the families.⁴⁴ Many studied internationally, gathering new ideas, new contacts and new marketing channels, particularly relevant to export horticulture and tourism. This also marked a distinct generational difference, as few farmers' sons had been able to study abroad during UDI and the war.⁴⁵ ESAP was convenient for them, and many soon established multi-million dollar enterprises.⁴⁶ These operations had many positive impacts but the emergence of young white millionaires against a background of increasing hardships in other sectors sent a message to the wider population that the legacies of settler privilege were not abating.

Employment and management structures on many farms evolved with structural changes. Larger or more complex farming systems evolved tiered employment structures. The importance of skilled-labour began to challenge racial norms: young white farm assistants were increasingly working alongside or under black managers and although such arrangements were isolated, they were significant departures from the practices of the past.⁴⁷ Vertically integrating farms, such as mills and butcheries, required differentiated skills and the emphasis on human resources and human capital increased accordingly. Official records show that labour poaching became a big issue between farmers, especially in skilled jobs.⁴⁸ Competition for other resources also

⁴³ For example, Mike Butler established the largest rose enterprise (100ha) in the southern hemisphere. The Dorward and Micklem families expanded their tobacco systems to become the two biggest private producers in the world. The Nicolle brothers amalgamated their grain farms into the biggest private grain producers in Southern Africa, accounting for more than 20 percent of Zimbabwe's annual wheat production.

⁴⁴ Only ten farmers did not have children returning.

⁴⁵ In the case study area several farmers marketed fresh produce through contacts which they had established at College in the UK.

⁴⁶ For example, the Ilsinks, Simon Philp, Tobs Strong and Hugo Firks were young entrepreneurs from in or around the case study area who took advantage of export markets and vertical integration to expand businesses rapidly.

⁴⁷ Alan Ravenscroft, in the case study area employed young graduates from the Tobacco Training Institute, who were increasingly working under established black farm managers.

⁴⁸ Minutes of the CFU President's Council Meeting, 27 November 1996. There were also numerous examples of white managers being 'poached' within the case study area.

increased. Land disputes emerged in certain districts, usually between expanding farmers.⁴⁹ A series of ‘water wars’ erupted between irrigators, particularly on the Marodzi and Mazowe rivers.⁵⁰ Competition for markets between butcheries, bakeries and value-added enterprises often sparked conflict between individual farmers. These differences, as with so much of the debate, appear to have been invisible to most outsiders, camouflaged by the aggregated gains of predominantly white commercial farming, in contrast to the hardships of other sectors.

The changing nature of the production environment and farming profile was reflected in the institutional and marketing structure of commercial farming.⁵¹ The Horticultural Producers Committee (HPC) and the Wildlife Producers Association (WPA) became new ‘commodity boards’ within the CFU. These shifted regional influences within the CFU and a commission was appointed to restructure the institution.⁵² ESAP changed the parameters of farmer activities, interests and lifestyles. Opportunities generally entailed harder work and higher risks, but better rewards. Imported luxury goods became available after two decades of relative restrictions, and more farmers indulged in power-boats, luxury vehicles and larger farmhouses, highlighting the hardships of less successful farmers and other sectors. Many senior farming respondents lamented these ostentatious displays of wealth, and identified them as key drivers of class and race resentment.⁵³ In the same way that isolated cases of bad employment, came to dominate external perspectives of the sector, so displays of wealth by some farmers shaped the direction and tone of public debate. For example, in Parliament, Minister Mangwende claimed that:

We all know that some commercial farmers after they have accumulated enough wealth prefer to buy planes than to build decent accommodation for the farm workers who made them rich in the first place.⁵⁴

Exporters were often accused of ‘externalising’ foreign currency through transfer-pricing.⁵⁵ This was true in the late 1990s, as political insecurity mounted, but during the early stages of ESAP

⁴⁹ For example, in Makonde region the Nicolle Brothers expansion of cereal farms, created resentment from other farmers who felt marginalised from the land market. In Glendale, John Sole purchased multiple farms.

⁵⁰ The water contests were largely due to the 1992 drought. Shamva and Marodzi water boards experienced several court cases regarding water rights and excessive pumping.

⁵¹ For instance, the commodity exchange (ZIMACE) was established for the trading of domestic commodities, particularly maize, wheat and soya.

⁵² Correspondence with Bill McKinney, August 2005. Interview with Gerry Davidson, Harare, August 2001.

⁵³ For example, Interview with Denis Norman, Sussex, October 2004.

⁵⁴ Extract from *Hansard* Record of Parliamentary Debate, 12 March 1992.

⁵⁵ The most common method is double invoicing, in which exporters sell flowers or produce to an agent or company overseas. A proportion of payment is channelled into an offshore account, whilst the rest is invoiced and paid at a deflated price back to the exporter’s foreign currency account in Zimbabwe. The system is very difficult to police, especially if the exporters and agents have a close relationship.

profits were chiefly recycled into farm infrastructure such as buildings or irrigation systems, but also into workers' housing, schools and clinics as government services declined.⁵⁶ Domestic-oriented producers and tobacco farmers also reinvested profits due to difficulties in securing foreign currency, but also because there was a sense of confidence in the sector. In Tsatsi-Marodzi, ten sizeable dams were constructed during this period and the area under irrigation nearly doubled. In response to government spending cuts, a health centre was established, a mobile farm clinic toured the district, and six new farm schools were set up.⁵⁷ On a visit to the Barwick in 1995, Border Gezi, Governor of Mashonaland Central, expressed his surprise at the quality and extent of farm-worker facilities on the four farms visited acknowledging that they dispelled his preconceptions.⁵⁸ Lending from banks to the commercial farming sector increased during ESAP and the finance sector's stake in land and farm infrastructural improvements grew accordingly.⁵⁹ In due course, capital reinvestment raised the values of farms and land prices.⁶⁰

Structural adjustment prompted new land-uses, new crop-types and further financial and social stratification. Some commercial farmers overextended their borrowings and went out of business during this period, whilst others on traditional maize and cattle systems stagnated.⁶¹ Class differentiation began to transcend racial boundaries; many salaried whites, battling with inflation, resented business owners (black and white) that were benefiting from market liberalisation (Weiss, 1994). Widening class divisions within the farming communities were more complex than during the Rhodesian era and undermined the institutional unity of the CFU.

The impact on the land question was significant. Moyo's (2000) research on land-use changes during structural adjustment is an important insight into the changing complexity of land demand. He argues that the unequal benefits of ESAP reforms fuelled the struggle for more land redistribution from both the peasant sector and the empowerment lobby. This increasing land

⁵⁶ These patterns are based on personal observations of farmer strategies during this period. Interviews and discussions with recently evicted farmers suggest that very few 'externalised' significant amounts of foreign currency. In the survey area, five farmers had externalised enough foreign currency to emigrate easily.

⁵⁷ During the 1980s, significant improvements in government facilities for health and education reduced farm-worker dependence on farms. During the government spending cuts of the 1990s, these services deteriorated. Kerry Kay (CFU Aids representative) argues that farming facilities improved in response, and that this pattern was evident across most districts. Neighbouring farmers would sometimes collaborate to spread the costs of schooling or on-farm clinics. For farmers there was a vested-interest, in being able to retain skilled workers.

⁵⁸ Personal attendance at the Tsatsi ICA Farmers Association Meeting, August 1996. Governor Gezi visited Willsbridge, Montgomery, Chaddesley and Msorodoni farms. He reassured farmers at this meeting that they had nothing to worry about, as they were demonstrating 'obvious commitment to Zimbabwean society'.

⁵⁹ Discussions with Duncan Hale, Standard Chartered Bank, Harare, October 2003.

⁶⁰ Most farm improvements, apart from irrigation infrastructure, were usually concentrated around central locations.

⁶¹ For example, Farnie Ferreira, a successful tobacco grower, bought a model farm near Concession, over-capitalised it and was forced into liquidation in the mid-1990s. At least five other local farmers were in severe financial difficulties during the same period.

demand was amplified by rejuvenated interests from international and urban capital seeking to exploit the opportunities of market liberalisation. A ready supply of land prevailed but land improvements increased prices. The growing importance of horticulture and intensification could release excess or under-utilised land, but existing legislation prevented the subdivision of property (Maposa, 1995). Subdivision restrictions were originally introduced to curb speculation by large companies in the colonial era. Despite being cited as a key constraint to land supply they remained in place. Moyo (2000) acknowledged that this was the prime time to have concurrently permitted sub-division and introduced a land tax, which would have allowed price and cost differentials between capitalised portions of farms and less developed outlying land.

At the same time, perceptions of white farmer affluence, attitudes and employment style shaped discussion in national forums, and influenced public perceptions, which increasingly isolated white farmers. During debates on the Land Acquisition Act in 1992, Mr Bhebe MP commented:

We need to keep a close eye on the commercial farmers... they are playing a yoyo with the nation... the white farmers realised that ploughing and all that was hazardous... they discovered new types of farming... they discovered that there is a safari business where you spend very little, all you have to do is construct a tall wire, to provide water fountains from farm to farm, the rest should look after itself...most of the commercial farmers do not have farms, only gardens. They hardly do any farming on those farms.⁶²

Bhebe was referring to farmers in Matabeleland and specifically to the game conservancies, but his sentiments fed into a stereotype. Even the Minister of Agriculture blatantly distorted facts and figures in populist parliamentary addresses: “right now ... the majority of them [white farmers] own six or more farms which are mostly being under utilised”.⁶³

1.3.2 The 1991/1992 Drought

Rain shortages between March 1990 and November 1992 amounted to probably the worst drought in Zimbabwe’s recorded history. The effects have been underestimated in analyses of structural adjustment and in terms of its influence on the land debate and the state-farmer alliance.⁶⁴ The drought interacted with structural adjustment, empowerment and the 1992 LAA

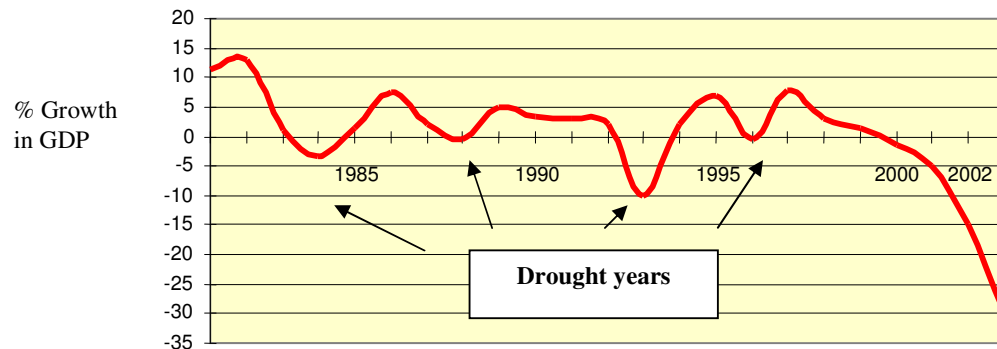
⁶² *Hansard* Record of Parliamentary Debate, 3 March 1992.

⁶³ *Hansard*, Record of Parliamentary Debate, 12 March 1992.

⁶⁴ Moyo (1994) and Bond (2000) acknowledge the seriousness of the droughts but fail to note their impact on the reconfiguration of the land question.

to magnify and highlight social, political and economic imbalances. The CFU stated in January 1992 that it was the worst drought in more than 50 years, particularly in Matabeleland.⁶⁵ Council noted that the drought had affected livestock and crops, and created massive unemployment in the communal areas, which had been the most badly affected.

Figure 1.1 GDP Growth Rates, Illustrating the Impact of Drought Years 1980-2000



Sources: IMF statistics (2001)

The severity of the drought was due to its widespread and prolonged nature. Livestock could not be moved locally, crops could not recover, and water storage shortages carried through to the irrigated winter crop and the following season's storage levels. The economy contracted by ten percent, the first negative growth rate in a decade, with significant implications for structural adjustment.⁶⁶ The impact of the drought affected all regions, not just the traditionally vulnerable provinces. John Meikle reported that the Eastern highlands had experienced one of the most difficult seasons on record. Dave Henson described the situation in Masvingo:

Catastrophic...unbelievable, worst in living memory, absolutely disastrous...It is fair to say that this is the worst position that most commercial farmers in the province have ever found themselves in... the situation in the communal lands is even worse.⁶⁷

In February, Nick Swanepoel noted that Makonde region had received the lowest rainfall since 1927 and Alan Burl stressed that the current drought was the worst on record.⁶⁸ Under these pressures 'squatter' problems re-emerged in the public forum. Stock theft, poaching and petty theft increased in commercial farming areas, especially those bordering communal areas. CFU

⁶⁵ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 January, 1992.

⁶⁶ Also see World Bank (2004).

⁶⁷ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 January, 1992: Masvingo Regional Report.

⁶⁸ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 February 1992.

regional representatives linked this to the drought and distinguished these patterns from the squatting tactics of the 1980s, arguing that the recent activities were more general and widespread, and not as focused or organized, even though they coincided with renewed and fiery land rhetoric.⁶⁹ Similar observations emerged after the 1994/5 drought.⁷⁰

The alliance between the farmers and the state was supported and undermined by different elements of structural adjustment and the drought. Farmers increased their proportions of foreign currency generation which bolstered the sector's position and the 1992 drought reinforced the dependency on commercial farmers and irrigation infrastructure for food security. The drought also exacerbated the stark contrasts between communal areas and commercial land: an increasingly inconvenient and awkward contradiction, which resurfaced in the land debate.

1.4 THE POLARISATION OF THE LAND DEBATE

The appointment of Witness Mangwende as Minister of Lands and Agriculture in 1990 indicated a political shift in the role of the Ministry. Mangwende had limited agricultural experience and was regarded by most farmers who knew him as part of a 'hardline' element within ZANU PF, a 'hatchet man'. Nevertheless, David Hasluck and John Meikle cautioned CFU council members against adopting confrontational stances towards government.⁷¹ However, the draft Land Acquisition Bill of 2 November 1990 unexpectedly carried a compulsory acquisition clause, without legal recourse or appeal.⁷² The CFU Council, caught off guard, called an emergency meeting of all members on 11 January 1991, held in the international conference centre at the Sheraton Hotel. It was the biggest ever gathering of white commercial farmers (4380 attended), and created a traffic gridlock in Harare.⁷³ The agenda focused on a hastily compiled report entitled "CFU Proposals for Land Reform". It was a bid to work with government, to maintain some influence over the process, but lacked practical detail or implementation suggestions. Its most significant message, the call for an independent land board to adjudicate the issue, was lost behind the negative interpretations of the meeting.

⁶⁹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 28 October 1992. As many as 2 million rural dwellers relocated to urban areas during the 1992 drought.

⁷⁰ Increased squatting in Odzi, Chinoyi, Angwa and Makonde was mainly based on gold panning and poaching. Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 31 May 1995 and 25 October 1995.

⁷¹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 September 1990.

⁷² Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 28 November, 1990: *Lands and Legislation*.

⁷³ Some farmers compared these scenes to strategies adopted by French farmers, who frequently jam the Paris ring road to protest against unwelcome agricultural policies. Interestingly, CFU records note that white farmers from the Transvaal drove tractors into Pretoria later that month, in protest at South African reforms. Whether or not there was a contagion element is not known. Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 30 January 1991.

The meeting was timed strategically to precede the initial strikes of the first Gulf War, to ensure global press coverage.⁷⁴ It was termed the ‘Great Indaba’, in reference to the meetings of the Ndebele nation, as an attempt to portray commercial farmers as Africans, which simply provoked mirth within the ruling party, as Mangwende later noted in parliament.⁷⁵ Denis Norman, who had recently resumed a cabinet position, was deeply concerned about potential interpretations and ramifications, particularly by the ruling party. John Laurie, John Strong and Jim Sinclair were equally apprehensive and tried to persuade Alan Burl, the new CFU President, to cancel the meeting, or to clarify its objectives. At a pre-arranged breakfast, facilitated by Denis Norman, Burl was unreceptive from the outset, apparently arriving forty minutes late with a joke about the obsolescence of past-presidents.⁷⁶

Denis Norman explained that a confrontational stance would breakdown the hard-earned ‘trust’ that had been developed with the government, whilst Laurie and Sinclair felt it could scupper the whole alliance. However, Burl had support from council and stood his ground.⁷⁷ David Hasluck (CFU Director) felt that the meeting was a necessary exercise to raise awareness within the international community and to demonstrate the power and unity of the farming community.⁷⁸ John Brown supported Burl on the basis of council solidarity, as did Anthony Swire-Thompson. This dismissal of the concerns of previous leaders demonstrated a new and different style of CFU leadership: more aggressive and more public.⁷⁹

Operationally, the Sheraton meeting ran smoothly and initial press reports were generally favourable. Mangwende clarified two important issues: firstly, that the five million hectares targeted was non-negotiable and, secondly, that productive farmers had nothing to worry about. On his subsequent ‘meet the farmers’ tour, Mangwende repeatedly assured farmers countrywide

⁷⁴ Mangwende apparently complained that he was forced to cut short a family holiday and to cancel a state visit with President Mugabe. Interview with Alan Burl, Marondera, January 2004.

⁷⁵ See *Hansard* Record of Parliamentary Debate, 12 March 1993.

⁷⁶ Past presidents of the CFU traditionally met with the incumbent leadership once a month, but this practice had gradually lapsed in the late 1980s. Interview with John Strong, Harare, February 2003; Interview with John Laurie, Harare, February 2003; Interview with Denis Norman, Sussex, October 2004.

⁷⁷ Interview with Alan Burl, Marondera, January 2004. There is little detail of attitudes towards the meeting in the CFU minutes, but David Hasluck supported Burl on the basis of council sentiment. John Meikle claims the he was the only council member to oppose the meeting. E-mail correspondence with John Meikle, June 2005.

⁷⁸ Interview with David Hasluck, Nyanga March 2003.

⁷⁹ After the meeting, Mr Foot (CFU Public Relations officer) was congratulated on having done a good job. Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting 30 January 1991. In the latter half of 1991, Mr Foot acknowledged the union’s move away from a non-confrontational approach. The minutes also claim that the more aggressive stance had done no harm. Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 25 September 1991 and Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 November 1991.

that the concept of ‘willing buyer - willing seller’ would remain. However, he also instructed the CFU to identify underutilised land. If they did not, he warned, government would.⁸⁰ Many farmers were disillusioned after the January meeting and most CFU regional branches reported low morale among their members. The depressed tone of district reports contrasts with head office minutes.⁸¹ Matabeleland farmers were particularly unhappy that the report, the meeting and the agenda had been devised by the CFU leadership with little consultation, participation or support from members. Hasluck explained that this was due to time constraints.⁸²

However, most farmers across their divisions missed the background impacts of the meeting. The idea of a privileged, but politically illegitimate, white minority publicly challenging government’s land policy was unacceptable to many in ZANU PF.⁸³ An amicable ‘Meet the Farmers’ tour by Mangwende soon afterwards concealed this hostility, but the ruling party was alerted to the organizational abilities of the CFU and to their new-found preparedness to confront aspects of government land policy. The CFU soon became aware of these realities. On 22 January, Hasluck and Burl met with Mangwende, Attorney General Patrick Chinamasa and Permanent Secretary of Lands and Agriculture Ndimande. The meeting lasted four hours, was often heated and “certainly not constructive from the Union’s point of view”.⁸⁴ The CFU council agreed that the next strategy was to lobby the private sector to encourage government to abandon designation and work with a market-based reform program. In mid-February, David Hasluck met with Michael Camdessus (IMF Director) and with Bernard Chidzero (Finance Minister). Camdessus was reviewing ESAP reforms and apparently:

made clear his disapproval of the controversial constitutional amendments...which could jeopardize the economic reform program... [and warned that] land reform can be the best or the worst of things, depending on its implementation.⁸⁵

Chidzero reassured them that the program would proceed under the willing-buyer willing-seller system and that productive farms would not be targeted. Market-based reforms were conducive to ESAP, but designation was not. Under these reassurances Camdessus was confident that the forthcoming Paris Donors Conference, which sought to raise US\$1 billion of credit for structural

⁸⁰ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 February 1991.

⁸¹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 30 January 1991.

⁸² Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting 30 January 1991. Bill McKinney cited this as a precursor to the split of the Matabeleland Farmers Union from CFU in 2004. E-mail correspondence with Bill McKinney, August 2005.

⁸³ Interview with Dr Kumbirai Kangai, Harare, December 2003. Dr Robbie Mupawose also commented on the misjudgements of this initiative. Interview with Dr Robbie Mupawose, Harare, January 2004.

⁸⁴ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 January 1991.

⁸⁵ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 February 1991: 4.

adjustment, would deliver sufficient funding. This confirmed the emergence of two ‘camps’ within the administration. The CFU perceived one as compliant and reassuring, and the other as radical, uninformed and unreasonable. There were two significant errors in farmer policies at this stage: the overestimation of their own power and the underestimation of this second ‘camp’.

1.4.1 Market versus Compulsory Acquisition

As the land question polarised, so debates about market reform versus compulsory acquisition intensified.⁸⁶ Roth (1994) argued that the 1992 LAA was unnecessary and that the ability of the market to deliver land was underestimated. Maposa (1995) identified the legal and practical shortfalls of compulsory acquisition. Analyses of the South African land market, suggest that the externalities of compulsory reform, such as legal contests, are unpredictable and often more timely and costly in the long run, than a market system of transfer.⁸⁷ Moyo (1994: 5), conversely, argued that market reform had failed to deliver satisfactory quantities or quality of land, and that it was therefore necessary to resort to compulsory purchase:

government sought a transparent, legal and administrative framework for land acquisition, which was democratically enacted by parliament, and which is explicit about compensating land owners. The Land Act seeks an administratively swift process for acquiring land by minimising legal contestations of land designations, while clearly articulating the reasons for land designations... government has finally established an appropriate legislative and administrative machinery to pursue a credible land redistribution program.

He also argued that the two systems could work concurrently and complement each other. Moyo’s view is problematic for three reasons: Firstly, government hardly entered the land market in the late 1980s, nor did it intervene through credit, land taxes, or subdivision.⁸⁸ Secondly, the compulsory acquisition act was ultimately impractical. It was vulnerable to legal challenges and prompted a united coalition of opposition among farmers, business, civil society and donors.⁸⁹ Finally, the two systems undermined each other. Compulsory acquisition removed any real incentive for government to enter the land market, while the existence of an active transfer market undermined the credibility of compulsory acquisition.

⁸⁶ For example, see: Roth (1994); Maposa (1995); Moyo (2000b).

⁸⁷ For example, see Bernstein (1994).

⁸⁸ The 1992 amendments sought to update and strengthen the 1985 Land Acquisition Act. Palmer (1990) shows that more than 1 million hectares changed hands through the first-option system between 1985 and 1990.

⁸⁹ Edison Zvobgo, ZANU PF’s legal ‘supremo’, subsequently acknowledged the shortfalls of the legislation during a conference in Copenhagen in 2001. Personal correspondence with Dr Jocelyn Alexander, Oxford, May 2005.

Also see: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/livelihoods/landrights/downloads/zim2001.rtf

The 1992 Land bill sought to change the nature and basis of land identification and the amount and timing of compensation.⁹⁰ Two aspects of the bill concerned the farmers. Firstly, the ability to designate land compulsorily and, secondly, alteration of the compensation clause from ‘adequate’ and ‘timely’ to ‘fair’ and ‘staggered’. ‘Fair’ implied a political levy on the price of land whilst ‘staggered’ removed any urgency from government obligations to pay compensation. In ignoring the time value of money (no interest would be paid on delayed or staggered compensation which would be exposed to inflation) the bill undermined a fundamental principle of the financial system. From an individual farmer’s perspective there were no incentives to offer land on this basis, particularly whilst an active open market operated alongside.

The designation principle was driven by political sentiment; it indicated the growing impatience and shifting locus of decision-making within land politics, which Mr Munyoro (MP) articulated in parliament:

for the last ten years we have been telling people that we cannot do anything because our hands are tied and people have not forgotten that we told them that our hands are tied. Why are we developing cold feet now... This bill without designation in it is not worth considering at all, just throw it away as a worthless piece of paper. It must entrench designation, then it may become a useful bill.⁹¹

Chief Justice Gubbay criticized the constitutional amendments, and warned that the new compensation clause would undermine property rights - a pillar of the constitution. He argued that Judges were custodians of the constitution and therefore had an obligation to comment.⁹² Moyo (1994) argues that this public judicial criticism undermined the credibility of the exercise, but concerns over designation were not restricted to white farmers, chief justices and international donors. The ZFU submitted a land proposal to the government registering concerns about the land bill, and particularly the clauses regarding compulsory designation and compensation.⁹³ Even the ICFU expressed concern at the compensation clause. In the

⁹⁰ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 28 November, 1990; *Lands and legislation*.

⁹¹ Extract from *Hansard* Record of Parliamentary Debate, 3 March, 1992.

⁹² *The Farmer*, 17 January 1991: 1.

⁹³ Copy of the ZFU proposal on land reform, appended to Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting 26 February 1992. The NFAZ and the ZNFU expressed similar concerns directly to the CFU the previous year, before they merged as the ZFU. Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 25 September 1991.

meantime the CFU lobbied third parties, briefing diplomats and members of the donor community about the concerns of compulsory acquisition.⁹⁴

Most farmers did not believe that an indiscriminate compulsory acquisition process would follow and were encouraged by some officials to think that the willing-buyer willing-seller process would prevail (von Blackenburg, 1994). The land market continued to function actively. On average, about 150 farms were being bought and sold on the open market every year during the 1990s. *The Farmer* began publishing detailed lists of monthly farm sales and prices, using deed registry data, to inform the general public about the availability of land.⁹⁵ The state moved half-heartedly, with the belief that it could always resort to compulsory acquisition. Very clear here, but absent in most analysis, is that there was never any agreement. Both groups fumbled forward expecting the issue to resolve itself on their preferred terms. The most striking feature of the standoff was the lack of compromise through land market interventions, and in particular the failure to implement land taxes.⁹⁶

1.4.2 Land Taxes

Debates around land taxes reflected the increasing complexity of the land problem and the manner in which obvious compromises were overlooked. Levies on land ownership could have provided the farmers with a route back into a market-based system of reform, but they failed to see the opportunity and would not trust government or the World Bank to formulate one. A land tax could have concurrently oiled the transfer of land by increasing supply and reducing prices. Hypothecation of these revenues would have amounted to a material contribution towards land reform by the white farmers and demonstrated goodwill within the process.

Land taxes were not new and had been used at various stages in the past. The Moffat government had passed “a mild land tax” in 1928, to counter land speculation, but it was only enforced until 1932 (Palmer, 1977: 185). A form of land tax always existed in Rural Council Rates, levied on the size of properties. During settlement negotiations in 1979, John Laurie, representing CFU Salisbury branch, called for a government land fund, prompting discussions

⁹⁴ Hasluck met the US Ambassador, representatives of USAID, and members of several other foreign missions to brief them about concerns over the designation and compensation clauses.

⁹⁵ In October and November 1995, 31 farms, totalling about 15000 ha were bought and sold, mainly in regions II and III, for a total price of \$20 million (average price: Z\$1300/ha; \$US90/ha). *The Farmer*, 1 February 1996: 12.

⁹⁶ The World Bank and other analysts had strongly recommended an interventionist market approach, based on land taxes and more lenient subdivision legislation. For example, see: World Bank (1991); Bratton (1991); Rukuni Commission (1994); Moyo (1994); Roth (1994a and 1994b).

about the merits of a land tax. In 1982/3 further discussions took place and an Agricultural Land Tax Bill was recommended to the Tax commissioner. In 1986 the World Bank argued that: “if a land tax is necessary to encourage a more efficient use of land, it should be relatively simple to administer and not impede efficiency.” The 1989 ZANU PF congress land paper and the New National Land Policy in 1990 both carried central clauses for land taxes. Moyo (1986, 1994 and 1998) called for land taxes over an extended period of time, whilst the Rukuni Commission (1994) recommended land taxes, subdivision and tenure reform. Despite agreement in principle among policy makers there was no delivery. The World Bank (2004: 49) details a chronological list of land market recommendations to the Zimbabwean government since 1990 and queries why none of the suggestions were adopted.⁹⁷

Many farmers supported the idea of land taxes: if implemented effectively, they amounted to an insurance mechanism for productive farmers by exposing underutilised or speculative land. They also promoted both equity and efficiency. During council debates in 1991, the CFU showed an awareness of government funding shortages. Mr Alcock suggested that “it would (also) be desirable to raise a levy on income tax to enable the government to have sufficient funds available, to pay for and adequately compensate land purchased for resettlement.” It was also suggested, somewhat hopefully, that Britain might consider compensating the difference between the price of designated land and the price of normal market-based reform.⁹⁸ Keith Harvey raised the idea of a land board and land taxes at the CFU Congress in 1992, ideas which were presented to government and later to the Rukuni Commission (1994).⁹⁹

Following the passing of the Land Act, an Agricultural Land Tax Bill was tabled in 1993 proposing two possible means of land levy: either on production, or on land potential.¹⁰⁰ CFU council initially agreed that the second option was better and that every farmer should have an approved farm potential plan within 3 years.¹⁰¹ David Hasluck then explained problems with regional classification, and argued that production rather than potential was better.¹⁰² This illustrated the divided opinions over taxes and the manner in which David Hasluck, well-versed

⁹⁷ In addition, The World Bank’s Agricultural Sector Memorandum (1991) calls for a land tax and for subdivision leniency. In 1995 the Bank submitted detailed proposals for a graduated land tax, and suggested the removal of all subsidies inflating land prices. In 1996 the World Bank advised VAT and a land tax within two years (Minutes of the CFU President’s Council Meeting, 27 November 1996). In 1998, at the Donors conference, the bank resubmitted this proposal, which was unanimously accepted by all stakeholders (World Bank, 2004).

⁹⁸ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 March 1991: 2. Minutes of CFU Council Meeting, 27 February 1991

⁹⁹ Minutes of the CFU Congress, August 1992.

¹⁰⁰ In June 1991, Hasluck attempted, unsuccessfully, to discuss the proposed tax with the Commissioner of Taxes. He feared a last minute, non-consultative implementation. Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 June 1991.

¹⁰¹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 May 1993.

¹⁰² Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 May 1993: 7.

in the legalities and terminology of the land discourse, used his relative expertise to influence the council position. He had previously assessed the proposed Bill draft in an internal memo, criticizing it extensively but unconvincingly (Selby, 2006: Appendix II).¹⁰³

At a second Paris Donor conference, in March 1995, the World Bank presented a paper entitled: “Achieving Shared Growth”.¹⁰⁴ It encouraged a market-based approach to land transfer and advocated a graduated land tax as a core element– based on land area, quality and location.¹⁰⁵ Hasluck firmly rejected the paper in council, arguing that the underutilization estimates were exaggerated and that the proposed system of land tax would be too complicated.¹⁰⁶ During a CFU debate later that year, Hasluck again opposed the idea of a tax claiming that it would be costly and complicated.¹⁰⁷ Hasluck’s opposition to the tax was an example of the perceived ‘resistance to reform’ within the CFU, at which much government criticism has since been directed. Land taxes also posed a conflict of interest for key councillors: Hasluck owned 1500 hectares in Burma Valley (Region I) which would have been subjected to a significant tax. David Irvine, Hasluck’s ally on council, also criticised the land tax but owned significant amounts of property in Mashonaland (Region IIA). However, the CFU remained divided on the subject: Bob Swift and Gerry Grant who visited Brazil in 1998, supported the idea of a land tax at the Donors Conference.¹⁰⁸ Indeed many of my respondents in Mashonaland did not oppose land taxes. Those from Matabeleland and Lowveld were generally supportive in principle on condition that natural region and topography considerations were included.¹⁰⁹ Some respondents acknowledge in hindsight that land taxes, which they had originally perceived as negative, should have been promoted as a positive form of insurance for farmers. Instead, CFU’s negative portrayal of land taxes seems, in hindsight, to have been short-sighted.

In September 1996, the Land Tax was still being debated.¹¹⁰ It came to the fore again during the 1998 Donors’ Conference, twenty years after the CFU first discussed land taxes as a safety net for land funding. Whilst the CFU debated, procrastinated, and failed to see land taxes as a solution rather than a problem, the government appears to have done even less. Constitutionally,

¹⁰³ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 31 March 1993: 2, section iv - Agricultural land Tax Bill 1993. See Appendix II: Summary of David Hasluck’s Land Tax critique.

¹⁰⁴ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 March 1995. *Lands and Legislation*, 20083.

¹⁰⁵ The World Bank paper referred to high estimates of under-utilised land in better regions and targeted the transfer of 1.6 million hectares in regions I, II and III.

¹⁰⁶ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 March 1995.

¹⁰⁷ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 September 1995.

¹⁰⁸ E-mail correspondence with Bob Swift (CFU President 1998), July 2005.

¹⁰⁹ These opinions may have shifted with time. Correspondence with Bill McKinney, (ex-Matabeleland rancher) August 2005. Discussions with Joseph Whittall (Lowveld rancher) Zambia, April 2005.

¹¹⁰ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 25 September 1996.

the Land Tax bill was less controversial than the 1992 LAA, but received very little parliamentary attention. Whilst the LAA had been fast-tracked through parliament, the Land Tax Bill remained on the table but off the agenda. The 1996 Tobacco Levy Act was subsequently rushed through, despite farmer outrage (See Chapter Five), and yet the Land Tax Bill remained in the background. Moyo (1994: 7) could offer no explanation either:

the state had been reluctant for *unclear reasons* [own emphasis] to use other measures such as land taxes to induce land redistribution and availability...Nor did the state encourage private land transfers in line with its rigorous regulation of land sub-division.

Renson Gasela, General Manager of the GMB at the time, suggests that this was due to “parliamentary lethargy” and that the 1992 LAA satiated immediate pressures for land policy within the ruling party: “they thought they had enough fire-power in the 1992 Act, but overlooked its toothlessness”.¹¹¹ Dr Kangai, Dr Mupawose and Denis Norman all claim to have supported the idea but could offer no explanations as to why it was not implemented.¹¹² The land tax debate remains a conundrum, and a missed opportunity, probably sidelined by more obvious elements of the land debate.¹¹³

1.4.3 Diminishing Farmer Consultations

The waning proximity of commercial farmers to the policy-making process was particularly evident during the 1992 LAA negotiations. At the Sheraton meeting and its provincial follow ups, Minister Mangwende promised farmers that they would be consulted throughout the drafting of the bill. In March, Emmerson Mnangagwa, Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, reassured the CFU that it would have access to updated copies of the draft throughout the process.¹¹⁴ He stressed that the bill would target underutilized, absentee or foreign-owned farms, and not resident productive farmers.¹¹⁵ However, in June, Mnangagwa claimed that he was unable to provide the CFU with a draft, as that was the responsibility of the Ministry of Lands Agriculture and Rural Resettlement (MLARR), but he explained that it was

¹¹¹ Discussions with Renson Gasela (Shadow Minister of Agriculture) Nyanga, March 2003.

¹¹² Interview with Dr Kumbirai Kangai, Harare, December 2003; Interview with Dr Robbie Mupawose, Harare, January 2004; Interview with Denis Norman; Sussex, October 2004.

¹¹³ The recent successes of the Namibian Land Tax further expose Zimbabwe’s lost opportunities. See Christoph Maletsky, “Land Tax Brings In Millions”, *The Namibian*, 9 March 2006.

¹¹⁴ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 March 1991: 3.

¹¹⁵ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 1 April 1992.

unlikely to reach parliament before September.¹¹⁶ The MLARR referred the CFU back to Mnangagwa. CFU minutes then document regular, but unsuccessful, requests to view the draft. In September they record that although the sixth draft of the Land Act had been produced, the CFU had still not seen it.¹¹⁷ At the end of October the minutes record that there is “still no reply from the MLARR regarding requests for a copy of the Land Acquisition Act - (nearly) a year after the first request, four formal letters and monthly verbal requests”.¹¹⁸ The *Lands and Legislation* report from this meeting notes that:

the final draft of the Land Acquisition Bill is shortly to be considered by the cabinet committee on legislation...there is grave concern... Minister Mangwende had promised the CFU an opportunity to comment on the Bill before it was sent to the cabinet committee.

In response, Alan Burl wrote another letter to Mangwende requesting a copy of the draft.¹¹⁹ In November, Burl received a reply stating that when the Bill was in working order it would be sent to the union for comment.¹²⁰ A copy of the Bill was finally made available on 27 January 1992, allowing three weeks for review (ICG 2004).

There were also three pending international issues affecting the manner in which the Bill was being drafted: firstly, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), secondly, the Donors' Conference in Paris at which funds for ESAP were to be raised, and thirdly, the South African settlement. In each case, the controversial clauses of the Bill had possible implications. CFU minutes in November note that the government was making a conscious effort to keep the profile of the Act low within these forums.¹²¹

Mugabe asked to meet Alan Burl in mid-February, and encouraged him to discuss amendments with the relevant Minister, Mnangagwa.¹²² One week later, Burl and Hasluck were called to Parliament, where they were presented with a single A4 sheet of paper with some minor handwritten amendments. According to Mnangagwa “it was government's intention to pass the bill... this was their policy and they would not be swayed – irrespective of whether it was fair or

¹¹⁶ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 June 1991.

¹¹⁷ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 25 September 1991.

¹¹⁸ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 30 October 1991.

¹¹⁹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 30 October 1991: Lands and Legislation.

¹²⁰ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 November 1991.

¹²¹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 November 1991.

¹²² Mugabe had asked Burl for a CFU position on land the previous September, but Burl argued that he was unable to do so before he had viewed the bill. Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 25 September 1991, p 5.

not, or whether it would work or not”.¹²³ At the subsequent CFU council meeting it was noted that “the bill had been presented as a *fait accompli*, without much chance or opportunity for discussion”.¹²⁴ It was decided that a letter should be sent to Mugabe, to record that there had been no opportunity for discussion. Council also resolved that key stakeholders such as the Judiciary and the Zimbabwe Chamber of Commerce should be kept informed about the lack of consultation. On March 12, Mangwende responded to the CFU in Parliament:

there have been lots of allegations from the farming community that they were not consulted in the process...The truth is that consultations took place at several stages...It is not justifiable to claim that farmers were not consulted. They were consulted. The kind of consultation they mean is actual involvement in the drafting of the bill itself. Obviously as a government we cannot allow that ...What the commercial farmers are implying is that because they gave us their views, which were not acceptable to us, then they were not consulted.¹²⁵

In the meantime, the CFU launched a publicity campaign, securing four television slots with ZBC, for information documentaries on commercial agriculture.¹²⁶ *The Farmer* magazine published a major review of the land issue.¹²⁷ The ZTA joined the initiative and took out full-page advertisements in the Financial Gazette and the Herald, emphasizing the importance of commercial agriculture to the economy and warning of the potential consequences of designation.¹²⁸ Mangwende reacted to the press campaign in Parliament:

Already the public is being bombarded with a concerted campaign against land distribution. We have seen big adverts in bold print in the Herald [by ZTA] against designation. There have been similar insidious articles in the Pink paper... recently there has been a video... intending to persuade people [that] white commercial farmers are the only ones who can use land properly... to portray the African as a pathetic and incompetent peasant and therefore not deserving to be given land...¹²⁹

¹²³ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 February 1992. Confirmed in interviews with David Hasluck, Nyanga, March 2003 and Alan Burl, Marondera, January 2004.

¹²⁴ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 February 1992, p 13.

¹²⁵ *Hansard*, Record of Parliamentary debate, 12 March 1992. Dr Kangai offered a similar perspective a year later. In a 30 minute interview with *The Farmer* he argued that “consultation does not mean agreement”. In a radio interview shortly afterwards he stated, “the farmers don’t have a power of veto...if we look in the Oxford dictionary the word consult does not mean agreement”. *The Farmer*, 27 May 1993: 3. Extracts of an interview with Dr Kangai on Radio 1 “Spotlight” Program, text carried in *The Farmer*, 3 June 1993: 7.

¹²⁶ The four documentaries provided an insight into crops, livestock, tobacco and an overview by Alan Burl, stressing the importance of the commercial farming sector.

¹²⁷ Cited in the Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 February 1992.

¹²⁸ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 February 1992.

¹²⁹ *Hansard*, Record of Parliamentary debate, 12 March 1992.

Moyo (1994: 1 and 4) argues that the dominance of the CFU in media outlets and on policy forums presented a distorted perspective on Zimbabwe's land problem, and that the government's own distorted portrayal of the issue as a contest between "greedy landowners and the majority of land hungry peasants" was justified on the basis that most of the poor did see it in these simple terms. The press campaign was convincing enough to raise concerns among donors which Mangwende sought to diffuse by clarifying government objectives in parliament:

the government will map out areas that will remain under LSCF and those that need to be purchased for resettlement purposes. In this way people who intend to buy farms will know which areas to go for. Those farmers who need to relocate themselves as a result of being displaced by resettlement will be able to buy farms in areas where they will guarantee that they will not be required to move again.¹³⁰

This implied that certain commercial farming areas would remain untargeted, and that others would be resettled on a 'block' basis. He then contradicted himself, within minutes, by promoting a more selective approach based on the nature of individual farms:

The kind of designation we are talking about is different from mere designation in blanket form. What we will be looking for is land which falls under the following categories: underutilised land under absentee ownership, foreign owned land, derelict land, land owned for speculative purposes and land from people with more farms than are considered necessary.¹³¹

Although the initial 'block' maps were drawn up, the program shifted increasingly towards the second approach, after the appointment of Dr Kumbirai Kangai as Minister of Lands Agriculture and Rural Resettlement in July 1992. This was widely seen as a conciliatory gesture and Kangai immediately compromised, explaining that the land program would proceed on both fronts, but that emphasis would be placed on securing land through 'willing-buyer willing-seller'. So compulsory acquisition was to run alongside market reform, and selective identifications were to complement block designations. It was a case of choosing all routes without actually taking any. These inconsistencies in official stances carried through to the land identification exercise.

¹³⁰ *Hansard* Record of Parliamentary Debate, 12 March 1992.

¹³¹ *Hansard* Record of Parliamentary Debate, 12 March 1992.

1.4.4 Conceptualising ‘Under-Utilised’ Land

The World Bank (1991) claimed that 65 percent of commercial farmland in Zimbabwe was underutilised. This statistic was widely cited in subsequent land debates, including parliamentary deliberations over the 1992 LAA.¹³² ‘Underutilisation’ was a key argument for promoting extensive land reform but its conceptualisation remained problematic.¹³³ Roth (1994), who co-authored the above-mentioned report, acknowledged broad assumptions in his calculations and that depending on land-use definitions, the area of underutilised land in Mashonaland could vary between 1.5 and 3 million hectares.¹³⁴ Due to the varied topography of individual farms, the margin for error in such an exercise without individual surveys is significant.¹³⁵ Hasluck claimed that the World Bank exaggerated the degree of inefficiency of commercial agricultural land and that the report made “expedient suggestions” regarding further land purchases.¹³⁶ Within parliamentary debate, the concepts of ‘underutilisation’ and multiple-ownership were important, but often distorted. Contextualising Minister Magwende’s earlier quote:

right now (the white farmers) are busy stocking most of their underutilised land with wildlife... the majority of them own six or more farms which are mostly being under utilised. Surely we need all that underutilised land for resettlement.¹³⁷

Against the distortions and misinformation of high level debate, concentrations of land ownership were ignored. Stoneman (1981: 135) illustrates that at Independence, 216 properties accounted for more than one-third of white-owned land, and that 736 farms (eleven percent by number) incorporated more than 60 percent.¹³⁸ These properties were owned by multinationals, large companies and a number of private ‘land barons’. Leibigs, Lonrho, Hippo Valley and Triangle estates owned more than 750 000 ha between them. At the other extreme, 55 percent of farms by number (averaging 425 ha) occupied less than ten percent of the total white-owned area, and were mainly privately owned family farms.

¹³² *Hansard* Record of Parliamentary Debate, 12 March 1992.

¹³³ For example, Alexander (1993: 191) identifies Cliffe (1986); Moyo (1989); Weiner (1988). In his detailed analysis of this issue, Roth (1994a: 330) cites similar work.

¹³⁴ Roth’s (1994) estimates assume that cattle-grazing in better regions amounted to underutilisation, irrespective of land gradient, soil type or wetland. At the 1995 Donor’s conference the World Bank claimed that 47 percent of commercial land was underutilised. Minutes of the CFU President’s Council Meeting, 27 November 1996.

¹³⁵ New satellite technology, such as googleearth.com and worldwind.com, is likely to revolutionise survey accuracy and credibility. Researchers are beginning to use images in their analyses. Nyanga Land Symposium, March 2003.

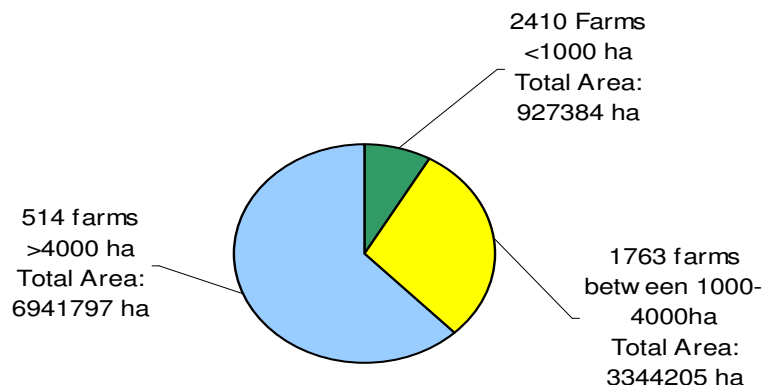
¹³⁶ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 31 October 1990: Lands and Legislation. He also dismissed a subsequent land meeting with the World Bank as pointless. Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 31 March 1993.

¹³⁷ *Hansard* Record of Parliamentary Debate, 12 March 1992.

¹³⁸ This work was based on Riddell (1980).

Roth (1994: 144) illustrated similar concentrations of ownership in 1988. He showed that more than half of all white farmers occupied less than one million hectares countrywide, or less than ten percent of all privately-owned land (Selby 2006: Appendix III). One-third of all white farmers (1400 by number) resided on only 500 000 hectares in Mashonaland. The productivity and utilisation debates regarding farm size remain unclear, but in my survey area productivity was generally higher on smaller farms (Selby 2006: Appendix I). Larger or multiple-farm structures tended to concentrate enterprises in core areas, with less intensive outlying areas. Larger farms were generally situated on more broken country.¹³⁹ The implications of these statistics are significant. Highly concentrated ownership was acknowledged by Rukuni (1994) and Moyo (2000a) but never incorporated effectively into land policy through, for example, graded land taxes. Furthermore, within the national land targets to transfer 5 million hectares, the smallest 2410 commercial farms (occupying less than 1 million hectares) were hardly worth considering, even in the better regions. Most interesting is that the pattern of vast landholdings by a few individuals and companies still survived from the 1890s, remarkably unchallenged.

Figure 1.2 Concentration of Land Ownership Among Commercial Farmers 1988



It is surprising that there was not more internal policy focus within the CFU, within the independent press or within academia, to encourage the companies and ‘land barons’ to release some land. But there were more obvious cases of massive underutilised land holdings in the public sector. The CFU and the press turned their attention towards examples such as Nuanetsi

¹³⁹ For example, Mountain Home farm occupied 1000ha with less than 150 ha of potential arable, the rest being granite outcrops, steep slopes and wetlands. Dorking farm, conversely, occupied less than 300 ha in total, but cultivated more than 200 ha.

ranch, and state farmland owned by ARDA and the Cold Storage Commission. The independent press also began advertising black-owned farms that were underutilised, often ignoring the historical disadvantages for new black farmers. Even Minister Mangwende sometimes argued that these were irrelevant:

The land question should be considered a national question not a racial issue...we have always said that if land is underutilised, it should be taken for resettlement, no matter who owns it (HON.MEMBERS: Hear Hear)¹⁴⁰

Kangai subsequently offered a more qualified opinion:

Officials are aware of the constraints which have hit our people hard...that they have not been able to develop their farms, but if one is sitting here with all the political connections ...and has not developed his farm, I do not think we will have sympathy with him.¹⁴¹

Parade magazine then published an article detailing the derelict state of Senior Minister Msika's farm in Concession, revealing that he had failed to service his \$30000 AFC loan since 1981. This was followed by a series of press articles revealing the multiple ownership and underutilisation of farms by senior officials.¹⁴² There was a general consensus within government that the CFU had initiated the articles as a secondary more aggressive stage to their press campaign.¹⁴³ Moyo (1994) sensed naivety in the farmer reactions:

To boot (the white farmers')... insistence that Minister's farms be designated first, showed how oblivious they were to the *realpolitik*. Direct confrontations with farming politicians implied that white farmers were ready for political struggle over the land question, despite their weak political constituency...white opponents of land reform have negatively fuelled the racial question through their attempts to caricature black rule

From CFU's viewpoint this *realpolitik* was being exploited. Hasluck argues that CFU's stance had less to do with race than with practical discrepancies:

¹⁴⁰ Extract from *Hansard* Record of Parliamentary Debate, 11 March 1992.

¹⁴¹ *The Farmer* Magazine, 25 March 1993.

¹⁴² Local opinion in Shamva suggested that Mujuru's and Ushewokunze's properties had been derelict for years and were rarely visited by their owners. Interviews and discussion with various Shamva farmers. Discussion with Keith Butler whose family sold a farm to Ushewokunze.

¹⁴³ Interview with Dr Kumbirai Kangai, Harare, December 2003.

An indigenous owner on a derelict farm was more politically legitimate than a white owner on a productive farm. There were massive parastatal land-holdings lying virtually derelict ... These sort of double standards were very difficult to explain to (CFU) members when their productive properties were being identified for compulsory acquisition.¹⁴⁴

But this statement illustrates how inherently race-connected the issue was. It was about practical discrepancies, along racial lines, which were a historical legacy. So in 1993, Government seemed intent on designating white farms despite massive unsettled state landholdings, whilst the CFU appeared oblivious to the negative political impacts in publicising underutilised black-owned farms. Behind this, debates about utilisation and productivity were clouded and misinformed on both sides, squandering opportunities for consensual or practical solutions.

1.4.5 Contentions over Land Identification and Land Allocations

The problems and politics of defining ‘underutilised’ land spilled into the farm identification exercise. When Minister Mangwende toured the commercial farming areas in 1991, each farmers’ association agreed to identify potential resettlement land and to prepare an illustrative map accordingly.¹⁴⁵ Farmer approaches to the issue were generally enthusiastic at this stage. In February 1991, it had been agreed in Council that the CFU should be involved in designating land, and continue to develop the information system and map.¹⁴⁶ However, by April 1991,

All areas felt very strongly that the Union should not rush to Government with any offers, but rather prepare their cases, area by area and wait for the approach from Government... many farmers were expressing the view that the crunch may not come.¹⁴⁷

Anthony Swire-Thompson explained that it was “not the intention of the CFU to get involved with the designation of land, but it was important that they participated in the identification”.¹⁴⁸ By the end of 1994, Peter Macsporrán had refuted the 1991 resolution :

¹⁴⁴ Interview with David Hasluck, Nyanga, March 2003.

¹⁴⁵ John Meikle claimed that Eastern Districts Branch could do this within a month. South West Mashonaland Branch stated they could do the same. CFU Branch chairmen were encouraged to get close to their Agritex officials to have good, timely information on the government agenda. Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 March 1991.

¹⁴⁶ The information system and map was a database of land ownership details for each district. Meeting of the CFU Council, 27 February 1991: Lands and Legislation Appendix.

¹⁴⁷ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 24 April 1991.

¹⁴⁸ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 24 April 1991.

it never was and never will be the CFU's duty to identify land for designation and it distresses me that rumors to the contrary persist – however when land is identified by AGRITEX, we help do an assessment of that particular piece of land in conjunction with all members of the Provincial Lands Identification Committees (PLICs).¹⁴⁹

The CFU's changing stance in council was largely irrelevant to the process on the ground, but reflected some members' concerns that involvement in designation created problems between members. Provincial and district CFU representatives described the social and ethical difficulties of identifying land from members of their farming communities. The point was made repeatedly that the owners of underutilised farms were often difficult to deal with – they were “awkward and volatile, and usually embarrassed”.¹⁵⁰ However, by distancing itself from ‘designation’ the CFU risked accelerating its waning proximity to the process.

All commercial farming areas had formed land identification committees by Easter 1992 and these were represented on the Provincial Lands Identification Committees (PLICs) along with members of local government, the ruling party and Agritex.¹⁵¹ In the middle of 1992, provincial officers from Agritex received a directive from the Ministry requiring the identification of ten farms in each province. In practice, land identification varied significantly between different provinces. Appendix IV summarises these differences. Whilst the process began well, political interferences came to dominate the work of the PLICs in most provinces, even when lists of farms had been consensually agreed with commercial farmers. For example, in Masvingo, mutually agreed properties were identified and offered, but rejected by head office in Harare, on the basis that they were only in two ICAs (Intensive Conservation Areas) and did not break up the ‘fabric’ of the white farming community. Dr Ndimande, Secretary for Agriculture, mentioned to the CFU that he did not simply want reproductions of the resettlement areas or a perpetuation of the “them and us” attitude, or a continuation of the dualist farming structure. He wanted the “integration of competent black farmers”.¹⁵² Thus even when identified farms met the criteria of the Kangai principles, another set of undefined ‘political’ criteria came into play, which seemingly nullified both the block designation and selective identification processes that were supposed to run concurrently. Swire Thompson expressed his frustration; “whatever way

¹⁴⁹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 30 November 1994.

¹⁵⁰ Minutes of the CFU President's Council Meeting, 27 November 1996.

¹⁵¹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 April 1992: Lands and Legislation Appendix.

¹⁵² Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 April 1992.

you turned - it was the wrong way”.¹⁵³ In contrast, Moyo’s (1994: 8) reading of farmer protests identified racial arrogance as a key factor:

White farmers believe that they, not the state, should decide on land designation... (but) such decision making powers in designating land undermines the legitimacy of the elected government in adjudicating the land problem... Most interestingly it demonstrates an arrogance that only makes sense in racial parlance.

Controversial designations, detailed in Selby (2006: Appendix IV), revealed the manner in which pressure was applied from above and below, and the often-conflicting agendas between local party officials, central government and technical departments. There is evidence to suggest that this frustrated some of the technocrats. During a meeting with the CFU, Kangai apparently seemed “visibly annoyed” with political interference, and articulated this in an interview with *The Farmer*:

land designation should be a technical matter and not up to politicians... if the politicians are going into the field and say that one should be designated and another should not... it will destroy the agriculture industry.¹⁵⁴

The PLIC process was unsuccessful. It was based on vague and often contradictory sets of criteria, and even when mutually acceptable properties were identified, it was frustrated by political interferences. It reflected differing interests between ZANU PF and government technocrats, and conflicts between local and national interests within these institutions. Final designation lists often differed from those produced by the PLICs. Highly productive farms were designated throughout the exercise, often next door to derelict land.¹⁵⁵ By the end of 1993, of the 97 properties designated, 40 had been revoked, seven were mutually agreed, and 46 were pending determination by the Minister. Four farmers were prepared to contest the issue in court.¹⁵⁶ Hasluck noted “extreme concern that the land identification committees had failed to identify properties as mutually suitable ... and (took) a serious view of the matter as it was incumbent of CFU to do something about it.” However farmer scepticism compounded with the revelations about the allocation of state acquired land to senior officials.

¹⁵³ Interview with Antony Swire Thompson, Harare, January 2004.

¹⁵⁴ *The Farmer Magazine*, 25 March 1993: 3.

¹⁵⁵ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 April 1993: Lands and Legislation Appendix.

¹⁵⁶ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 October 1993.

Concerns about land allocations dated back to the reforms of the early 1980s. Moyo and Skalnes (1990) had previously warned of the use of corrupt practices in the land allocation of resettlement land. CFU provincial reports record that members' properties being leased from the state were being visited by retired police and army personnel in 1993.¹⁵⁷ When controversy erupted over land allocations early in 1994, it was at the height of the mutual frustrations of the land identification process. Batha Farm in Wedza, which was acquired in April 1993 for the resettlement of 33 families, had instead been allocated to ex-Agriculture Minister Mangwende.¹⁵⁸ When the news broke, Mugabe publicly revoked all state leases, although in practice nothing happened, and the credibility of government's reform program plummeted. It was an issue that drew overseas attention, and attracted criticism from the press, particularly in the wake of the 1992 LAA.¹⁵⁹ Although the extent of the problem was quite small, the principle was large, and had significant political repercussions. On 11 May, Sydney Malunga, an outspoken ex-ZAPU MP, moved a motion in parliament for full disclosure of all state land lease allocations.¹⁶⁰ Most had been allocated to civil servants or high-ranking members of the security forces. The allocations of farms to party officials and influential supporters in the 1993 designations,¹⁶¹ and the 1994 'Tenant Farm Scandal',¹⁶² were, according to Raftopolous and Moyo (1995: 26), a poorly disguised attempt to create a black landed class, who would support the government. For ordinary observers it amounted to hypocrisy from a government that always insisted on monopolising the moral aspects of the land issue

1.4.6 Farmer Scepticism and the Communication Breakdown

The breakdown of communications between the commercial farmers and the state was both a cause and symptom of deteriorating land negotiations. Farmer strategies were seen as underhand and unpatriotic and at the very least reactive. Farmers increasingly saw government as corrupt, incompetent and insincere. International concerns and negative-publicity were attributed to organized farmer lobbying, rather than to inherent flaws or inconsistencies in the program. Moyo (1994:7-8 and 16) saw the attitudes of white farmers as a problem:

¹⁵⁷ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 24 January 1994.

¹⁵⁸ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 24 May 1994.

¹⁵⁹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 30 March 1994.

¹⁶⁰ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 24 May 1994; Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 28 September 1994.

¹⁶¹ Thirteen farms were originally designated for the Osborne Dam followed by another Seventy farms countrywide following the 1992 Land Acquisition Bill.

¹⁶² 400 State leases to white farmers were rescinded and reallocated to party supporters. Details of the beneficiaries were later revealed in March 2000. See the Dongo List www.zwnews.com.

There has been little proactive action by white landowners and their representative CFU to promote lasting reconciliation through reasonable offers of land ... claims by farmers' representatives that they agree with the principle of land redistribution are not backed by concrete land offers, hence a poor negotiation climate for the land question... it appears that the political problem facing Zimbabwe is the absence of good faith on the part of the [white farmers] in negotiating and redressing the land question.

Farmers strategies were shaped by a growing mistrust of government and ruling party motives. After the 1989 Party conference the CFU realized that they were being distanced from decision-making, fuelling their concerns about the motives of the LAA, which prompted their calls for a representative land board to be appointed. CFU minutes following the Emergency meeting in 1991 noted that the land issue was their “biggest and most serious problem since the war”.¹⁶³ The CFU proposal stated that “the most important single issue facing Zimbabweans of the future is how the land question is managed today”.¹⁶⁴

In the 1980s, most farming leaders had been impressed, if somewhat surprised, with the calibre and pragmatism of leadership within government. The post-1990 CFU leaders were more suspicious and critical. The relative stability and prosperity of the 1980s, compared to the economic instability, growing racial tensions and direct contest for the same resources in the 1990s obviously strained relations, but there was a difference in farmer strategies. Norman, Sinclair and Laurie had used quiet diplomacy and negotiation. The CFU administrations of the 1990s were more aggressive and more public. Immediately after the 1992 LAA, Alan Burl stated that “this bill violates, the provisions of the constitution, of the CHOGM declaration of human rights... the impact on the economy, foreign investment and structural adjustment is significant.”¹⁶⁵ Hasluck cautioned that: “the issue must be fought with logic - not emotion!”.¹⁶⁶ However, he had expressed his own doubts to the New National Land Policy in 1990:

Against this background, what should farmers be doing in the 1990s?... On the face of it, quit now, while the going is good ... get paid something for the farm before government cannot afford to pay anything (Alexander, 1991: 606).¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 30 January 1991: 2.

¹⁶⁴ Extracts from the CFU Position Paper presented at the Emergency Farmers meeting, 11 Jan 1991 (CFU, 1991).

¹⁶⁵ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 January 1992: Lands and Legislation Appendix. Both Dr Kangai and Dr Mupawose appeared to resent the manner in which the CFU used human rights as a basis for opposing the LAA.

¹⁶⁶ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 29 January 1992: Lands and Legislation Appendix.

¹⁶⁷ Cited in the *Financial Gazette*, 28 August 1990.

Shortly after the 1991 meeting, he presented an internal memo entitled ‘Ten Commandments for Development in the 1990s’ – a satirical set of criticisms against government, perhaps revealing an element of the arrogance to which Moyo (1994: 8) alludes.¹⁶⁸ In the latter half of 1991, the CFU public relations officer, Mr Foot, acknowledged “the union’s move away from a traditional non-confrontational approach over the last year” and claimed that the more aggressive stance had done no harm.¹⁶⁹ In April 1993, Hasluck implied that farmers should re-enter the political arena:

farmers individually and collectively must recognize the importance of maintaining standards of governance, as if this was usurped the chaos that we see in many neighbouring countries would prevail...[the CFU must consider] taking a more aggressive stance in influencing government than it [does] now.¹⁷⁰

Where did the ‘apoliticism’ of the CFU sit in all this? Hasluck was not in favour of direct involvement in opposition politics, or of the new FORUM Party becoming embroiled in the land issue and his stance was “supported by many councillors, who agreed that CFU should remain low profile and separate from the FORUM Party”.¹⁷¹

The politics of uncertainty elicited inconsistent responses, but scepticism among CFU officials over government intentions and capabilities became more consistent. CFU Makonde branch noted that “Mr Swanepoel reported on a meeting held in his area with Vice President Muzenda. He said that he was horrified at the lack of information the Vice-president had regarding the basic workings of commercial agriculture”.¹⁷² Notions of superiority and arrogance had waned in the 1980s, but re-emerged with increasing corruption, poor governance and official anti-white sentiments. Farmer scepticism illustrated one side of a two-way breakdown of communications within the farmer state alliance. Farmer reactions were interpreted by ZANU PF as resistant and confrontational. The process fed itself, as communications deteriorated and positions polarised. Structural changes in the sector created further tensions between the CFU and Government after commercial farmers were accused of neglecting food production and holding the nation to ransom during the 1992 drought. Mr Ncube MP had commented:

¹⁶⁸ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 30 January 1991.

¹⁶⁹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 25 September 1991 and Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 November 1991.

¹⁷⁰ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 28 April, 1993: 4.

¹⁷¹ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 30 June, 1993.

¹⁷² Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 30 October 1991.

the commercial farmers union ... do not know that there is independence in Zimbabwe... they think that they can say and do anything, (even) sabotage the economy...there is a shortage of maize because the people who were supposed to be growing maize abandoned that and have chosen tobacco because they believe that there is more money in it.¹⁷³

In April 1992, Vice-President Muzenda requested early maize deliveries by commercial farmers as the communal crop had failed. He explained that between thirty and fifty thousand tons was needed within three weeks. Burl suggested that an incentive price of \$1500 /tonne for the relevant amount, on a first-come first-served basis, would ensure timely delivery. After discussions with Minister Mangwende, Muzenda returned, arguing that \$1500/t was too much and offered \$1000/t. Burl doubted that \$1000/t would be enough, explaining that farmers needed maize for their staff, and livestock (given the lack of grazing) and that the market price was likely to rise. Although the official price was still \$550/ton, the parallel market price had reached \$1000/ton. Within days, Mugabe vilified commercial farmers: headlines in *The Herald* read “Farmers Demand \$1500 Or They Will Not Deliver”.¹⁷⁴ Burl argues that the market would have been the quickest way of meeting emergency demand.¹⁷⁵ Burl noted that state media made no mention of the CFU’s joint-initiative with USAID to set up a famine early warning system, nor did they mention that Burl had facilitated the transport of maize to drought-stricken communal areas two months previously.¹⁷⁶ John Meikle suggested that it was unhelpful to get involved in maize politics, but the issue was more fundamental: commercial farmers were increasingly convenient scapegoats. CFU officials were on the back-foot. Swire-Thompson observed:

It was difficult to know what to do... elements of the ruling party had no intention of considering our opinions, or listening to our suggestions ... lobbying other stakeholders was an obvious strategy. We felt that the more people that were informed the better.¹⁷⁷

Farmers were exercising a ‘voice’ option. Under pressure and feeling threatened they attempted to apply the brakes within the existing institutional arrangement, within which the international community and donors were seen as arbitrators. Early in 1993 Antony Swire-Thompson sent a letter of qualified support to the Paris Donors Conference. The letter emphasised the impact of

¹⁷³ *Hansard* Record of Parliamentary Debate, 25 February 1992.

¹⁷⁴ Minutes of the CFU Council meeting, 29 April 1992: 9-10.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Alan Burl, Marondera, January 2004.

¹⁷⁶ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 26 February 1992. A year later, excessive and ‘unnecessary’ imports of soya beans were blamed by the state press on commercial farmers’ estimates. According to CFU and the GMB, Vice President Muzenda was responsible for the import decision. Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 31 March, 1993. Discussions with Renison Gasela, Nyanga, March 2003.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Anthony Swire Thompson, Harare, January 2004.

the drought and the potential implications of a large-scale land reform in its wake. It provoked a furious reaction from a normally amicable John Nkomo.¹⁷⁸ There were critical articles in *The Herald*, *The Chronicle* and in *Parade* magazine.¹⁷⁹ Two issues incensed ZANU PF: firstly, the perceived spoiler tactics and, secondly, the independent lobbying of the CFU.¹⁸⁰ *Parade* magazine published the CFU's rebuttal but Mugabe refused to meet Swire-Thompson for months, in much the same way as he had shunned Laurie after the 1985 elections.¹⁸¹ The CFU eventually asked Denis Norman to engineer a meeting, but communications remained strained.¹⁸²

Moyo (1994:4) argues that Mugabe sought to find a means of conciliation: "President Mugabe's speeches since [1990] have emphasised the important role that land can play in reconciling blacks and whites". If this was Mugabe's public face, a different story emerged in other forums. Opening a central committee meeting, in September 1993, Mugabe declared:

Government will not surrender the people's right to a greedy bunch of racist usurpers...these racist Rhodesians, sponsor the FORUM party and treat their workers worse than their dogs ... (these) farmers are either the direct descendents or inheritors or successors of the land and power grabbers of 1890.¹⁸³

This was the start of a campaign to discredit commercial farmers. It differed from the sporadic election oriented outbursts of the 1980s and became increasingly sustained. It was used to specifically portray and suggest the illegitimacy of farmers' involvement in 'opposition' politics. In April of 1994, a formal meeting was arranged with the Agricultural Editor of *The Herald* newspaper, to try to put an end to reports that opposition to land redistribution had been led by 'disgruntled white farmers'.¹⁸⁴ Yet it was this stereotype of the white farmer – arrogant, selfish, resistant to change, disgruntled, unpatriotic and confrontational, that began to shape and unite the spectrum of frustrated stances within the ruling party.

1.5 CONCLUSION

¹⁷⁸ The conference had been convened to raise funding and investment for ESAP.

¹⁷⁹ Mark Chavunduka, "Farmers Unpatriotic: Paris Letter Sparks Row Between State and CFU", *Parade Magazine*, February 1993: 6-7.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Dr Kumbirai Kangai, Harare, December 2003.

¹⁸¹ "Letter taken out of context – CFU Chief", *Parade Magazine*, February 1993: 7.

¹⁸² Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 October 1993. Interview with Denis Norman, Sussex, October 2004.

¹⁸³ *The Farmer Magazine*, 23 September 1993: 1. Quoting ZIANA.

¹⁸⁴ Minutes of the CFU Council Meeting, 27 April 1994: PR Report.

1990 was an important watershed for several reasons: the expiry of the Lancaster House Constitution, the implementation of structural adjustment, the return of land to the forefront of national discourse and the formal recognition of support for black economic empowerment. A wider array of interest groups engaged in a wider array of land uses, which fuelled a more complex set of land demands and pressures. Urban and international capital flowed into horticulture and wildlife, while long-standing demands for land in communal areas were joined by demands from aspiring black commercial farmers, now legitimised by the market ideologies of ESAP. In the 1980s land policy and agricultural policies had not contradicted each other. In the 1990s they did, heralding a new, more unpredictable and threatening era for white farmers.

The changes reflected and encouraged a reconfiguration of the state. Decision-making was increasingly confined by disagreements between the inner circles of the ruling party and government technocrats and moderates. The 1992 Land Acquisition Act attempted to transfer ‘control’ of property rights from the judiciary to the executive, and the ruling party sought to increase its control of the land question and the valuable political capital around it. Multiple, overlapping and often contradictory land policies emerged, in an attempt to cater for all interests, but really delivering to none. Compulsory land acquisition was incongruent with structural adjustment, particularly whilst an active land market operated. Structural adjustment and the democratisation process demanded a rolling back of the state, but in Zimbabwe this was partial and selective. Expenditure cuts were restricted to key sectors such as health and education and land resettlement, whilst spending on defence and government salaries increased. The 1992 drought impacted heavily on the economy, pressures for land and the vulnerability of the state.

The profile of the commercial farming sector evolved considerably during this period, primarily due to structural adjustment. The expansion and diversification into export-oriented land uses such as horticulture, tourism and wildlife management, altered systems of land use across the country and brought previously marginal land into the main stream economy. Vertical integration and the processing of agricultural products also changed the structure of the industry. These structural changes and the influx of urban and international investment into agriculture increased the diversity and differentiation of the sector. The intensification of land use should have made commercial agriculture more conducive to reforms and adaptations, through subdivisions and land taxes, underlining the significance of these lost opportunities.

Communications between white farmers and the state deteriorated significantly and any trust that had developed during the 1980s was lost. Decreasing consultation with the CFU during the drafting of the LAA, political interferences in land identification, and controversial land allocations fuelled doubts across the farming community. Among government officials, CFU strategies were seen as confrontational, and at best defensive. The state blamed the farmers and the farmers blamed the state as racial mistrust re-emerged amidst the new uncertainties. The CFU representatives dealt with amicable front men for most of the post-independence era, without paying enough attention to background signals from the *politburo* or from local party and government, particularly over land identifications.¹⁸⁵ There was a tendency by farmers to listen to signals that they wanted to hear, and ignore those they did not. Illusions of indispensability, scepticism over government's ability to proceed with reform, and a focus on the opportunities of ESAP all contributed to a collective myopia. Demands for land had not subsided though, and were increasingly tied with the interrelated struggles for political terrain and economic terrain, illustrated through aggressive black economic-nationalist aspirations which emerged boldly after 1995.

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¹⁸⁵ See World Bank Country Evaluation Report (2004).

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